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III

DAILY LIFE

The Day's Work

THE villager wakes and rises with the sun. Being at liberty to take his repose at any time of the day, whenever indeed he feels a tiredness in his limbs, he is not likely to be a lie-abed in the morning. If the weather be hot he is early at work in the garden to have his day's task through before the sometimes grilling heat of noon; if the night has been a cold one (for many New Guinea nights are cold to those who live in New Guinea), he issues forth from his house bringing some of the night's fire with him, to meet the sun and to profit by the warmth of its first rays.

There is no bustle of preparation for breakfast. A lump or so of cold taro or a fragment of roast sago left overnight constitutes the morning meal, and often enough a man is content to go with none at all. If he have work before him in the garden he will soon set off accompanied by his wife and children, with his axe and knife in his hand and his rude digging-stick over his shoulder; usually, too, with a long spear against some chance of game. If there be no immediate call for his masculine strength in the garden he allows his wife and children to go to their work alone, to perform the drudgery of weeding and grubbing while he employs his mind and fingers upon some more interesting or creative task—such as the fashioning of a spear, the plaiting of a cane belt, or the chopping of a mess-bowl from a block of wood.

Such employments as these he follows with a deal of comfortable assiduity, for not only does he see the object take shape as he proceeds, but the nature of his work permits of a seat in the shade and, like knitting or hemstitching, does nothing to hinder conversation.

Some women will have remained at home to perform

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sedentary tasks of their own—different always, for none of the crafts are shared by the two sexes. So we may see the clay pot growing coil by coil in the hands of the housewife, the bark-cloth spreading out into a sheet under the blows of her mallet, or the furnace of green leaves, rolling out clouds of smoke, from which she will obtain a small residuum of salt. These and many other such tasks are woman's province, upon which there is no male encroachment.

Some work therefore will be going forward in the forenoon, but there is not unusually a quietness in the village during this part of the day. The children may have remained, but they are as likely to be down by the river-side or playing at work in the garden with their elders. Of those men and women who chance to be unoccupied none will think it shame to sleep, and there will be no loud life about the village, perhaps no sound but the ceaseless regular whacking of a bark-cloth maker's stone mallet upon the log.

Meanwhile the bulk of the village population is probably employed in the garden. If it be the mere routine of weeding and of gathering a bagful of taro for the pot, gardening is women's work; but whenever the business of clearing, planting, or fencing is afoot, then the whole family will be engaged, or sometimes all the families of a clan, in a somewhat unorganized and happy-go-lucky working bee.

The heat of the garden clearing, fenced in by a high wall of forest, may be almost insufferable to a European, but the native, hatless and streaming with sweat, bears it well enough. The party may be cutting into the bush to increase the area for fresh planting. The women and children clear the undergrowth and trailers and the men deal with the tree trunks. Amid the sound of axe-blows and those loud expulsions of breath—*'ugh, ughl'*—which accompany them and with which the Orokaiva seems to convince himself he is working very hard, may be heard occasionally the clear yodel-like call, something between a shout and a song, which shows the workmen to be in his highest spirits. And when from time to time he brings down a tree, he accompanies the prodigious crash of its fall with a not less prodigious Orokaiva hoot, and turns to the next, or throws

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Manufactures

463 Arts and crafts have reached no high development, nor, on the whole, do they make any pretensions to artistry. For the most part they are common knowledge and everyday accomplishments. To a very limited extent do particular [438] crafts belong to particular districts; for instance, the people of Huhurundi (Sauaha) are said to excel in the painting of bark-cloth—which is probably a matter of tradition; and the people of the middle Kumusi to excel in the making of stone clubs—which is merely a matter of a supply of pebbles. Again, in a limited degree we see signs of individual pre-eminence. A man may specialize in the making of *tava* or wooden bowls by virtue of a steady hand and a good eye, or a woman may have a reputation as a bark-cloth painter. But such individual skill is, I am convinced, the result of natural gifts rather than of any special training. It appears that any and every man tries his hand at carving a bowl out of a block of wood, and only those who find they have a special aptitude care to persist and perfect themselves. Investigation proves that such crafts are not necessarily or even usually hereditary.

In the main, therefore, it appears that every man is an all-round craftsman. If he is a jack-of-all-trades he is likewise a fair exponent of all of them; and if he is a master of one of them he is likely to be a master of all, simply because he is born with a certain adaptable skill or handiness.

462 The only labour division of any great interest is the habitual one between the sexes. Pottery, bark-cloth, pandanus mats, string, and small fish-nets are made by women; weapons, ornaments, wooden bowls, coco-nut mats and baskets, plaited belts, and the larger fish-nets are made by men.

323 317 *Pottery* (*Obu*). The yellowish clay used for pottery is not found in all parts of the Division, and the collecting of it may mean a long journey. It is brought home in a wrapping of moist leaves, and beaten out on a large flat board (*obu-* [442] *iri*), viz. the flange of a forest tree. The club is a piece of plain wood called *obu kungabu*.

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dried forms a coarse but tough material. The typical club is an elongated pebble (*kisi*) with incised criss-cross lines (*jari*). The work is done by women, who make a common practice of withdrawing beyond the edge of the village, ostensibly to remove the annoyance of the loud continued tapping. The decoration—of which examples have been depicted elsewhere—is the artistic prerogative of women. It is executed in red and black. The red is a vegetable dye; the black is lamp-black obtained by burning a resinous gum called *ongo*. This, placed in a small receptacle, is lighted and covered with a large inverted fragment of pottery. The burning *ongo* gives off a heavy aromatic smoke and the soot is deposited on the under-surface of the pot. A little water is subsequently added and the black pigment is mopped up out of the pot with a sponge of grass and squeezed into a fragment of coco-nut or a cockle-shell, which is to serve as palette. Using for brush a tuft of frayed betel husk, the painter works quickly, confidently, and often carelessly. The workmanship is, as a rule, exceedingly crude, but the decorative effect is excellent, being somewhat enhanced when the garish colours are softened by a distant view and a shade of dirtiness.

Pandanus Mats (*Obi*). The broad leaves of the pandanus are sewn by women into mats. The minute prickles on edge and midrib are shaved off and the whole leaf is rubbed with those detergent leaves that serve the native for sandpaper. This is said to hasten their drying and to ensure their flexibility. When dry they are sewn together in two complete layers with a partial transverse layer of narrower strips between them. The finished mat, together with a plain block of wood for pillow, constitutes the Orokaiva's bedding.

Coco-nut Mats (*Teri*). The mat for outdoor use is made of coco-nut leaf. A frond is split down the midrib and the leaves of either side are then woven neatly together to form a mat for which the halves of the split midrib form the side borders.

At the wider end of the mat two small appendages called *tengere* ('ears') stand out from either side. They are formed by plaiting the leaves which pass below the end of the mid-

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pig inside, enclosed as if in a made-to-measure basket. It remains questionable whether the pig travels more comfortably thus than in the normal way with its feet tied to a pole.

Plaiting. Belts are made by men with very thin strips of cane. Several effective patterns are done in yellow and black of which I have recorded only the commonest one (*vide* Plate IX). Belts and armlets or leglets are made from a species of brown creeper fibre, plaited very closely into bands of varying width.

String and Rope. String such as is used in making small fish-nets is made by women. They tease out pandanus fibre and roll it on the thigh. Rope, e.g. for pig-nets, is made by men from pandanus.

Woodwork. Wooden bowls (*teva*) are cut out of blocks of soft wood. The work is done with a light adze and the surface is smoothed with sandpaper leaves. The finished article is a light boat-shaped vessel, with or without a handle at one end; though entirely without ornament, it sometimes possesses a graceful outline. These *teva* are often made by men who appear to be experts, and they make the nearest approach to the stock-in-trade of a specialist.

The carving of hard-wood into lime spatulae has been already mentioned (p. 66). With somewhat rare exceptions such carving is inferior or careless; and in many cases scratching would be a better word.

Weapons

Spears. The principal weapon is the spear, of which several varieties are distinguished.

(1) The ordinary pig-spear (*o-ki*) is made of black palm-wood (*koropa*). It is heavy and long—often about 12 feet. The section towards the point is half oval, and there are two sets of barbs.

(2) The fighting spear (*overo*) is much lighter and only about 9 feet in length. It is made either of *koropa* palm or of a reddish hard-wood (*kimana*) which takes a high polish. The section toward the point is approximately square; there are four sets of barbs, often well cut; and some distance below

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000 245 round about. Natives will ask you politely for an orange-pip when oranges come down from Kokoda with the mail, but I have never yet heard of an orange-tree successfully grown by a native.

Sometimes you may meet a man returning from a journey with a bundle of rooted saplings on his shoulder —bread-fruit or *Ajimo*, the bark-cloth tree—which he means to plant in his garden. Near Dobodura I have seen a plantation of young *Ajimo* trees—perhaps 500—about 10 feet high and somewhat densely planted. The native is prone to plant his trees too closely, especially coco-nut and betel palms. The latter may sometimes be seen in soldierly rows, so close together that a big man could scarcely pass between. On the site of a new village an energetic village constable had made his own plantation of coco-nuts, lined, spaced, and each protected by a little fence against the pigs. Everything reflected credit upon his observation of white men's methods except that his coco-nuts were not more than 12 feet apart.

244 (*d*) *Tending and Protecting.* While the taro are young they are kept fairly clear of weeds, but once they are fully established work grows slack and they are left to fight their own battle. Weeding, like most drudgery, is [463] mainly woman's work. It is done principally by hand or by trade-knife, and the weeds are thrown aside or hung untidily on the tree-stumps. As there is no implement resembling a hoe, the soil loses the advantage of being tilled and weeded at one and the same time.

244 There are many degrees of tidiness and untidiness in native horticulture, and, as we have observed, the neglect 461 of *kurokuro* grass is the most serious offence. But a weed-538 grown garden and its owner are objects of contempt. There is a tale (not wholly relevant but not to be spoiled by omitting the irrelevant) of a young bride, wooed by a ne'er-do-well youth and won by his false account of the large and well-kept garden which is to be hers. She consents to accompany him home and become his wife. Nearing his village they pass through broad expanses of

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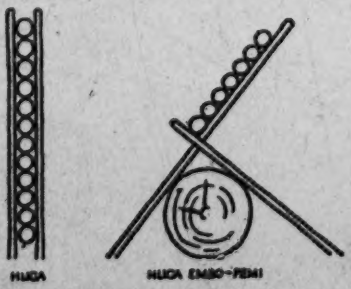
often well advanced before the circle is complete. The actual building of the fence is men's work, though women carry timber. The reason why women do not build is, I am told, that the fence would be no good.[1]

The several varieties of pig-trap have been mentioned before (pp. 113–14). They are commonly built just within the garden fence so that the raiders are not only frustrated but captured. Until the fence is completed some people must live in the garden houses to scare away the pigs with their voices. It is said also that the smell of smoke will make them suspicious and keep them off, and one may sometimes see a large fire piled with green leaves and kindled towards evening. On moonlight nights men will wait with spears on the garden platforms and attack the pig among the taro—a really hazardous undertaking, and one which is responsible for many terrible casualties. Nowadays the villagers will often beseech the loan of one's shot-gun and shooting boy on a moonlight evening.

Some well-advanced gardens become infested with rat-like marsupials. There are miniature traps for them—constructed on the principle of the pig-trap with a falling weight—and another ingenious kind of pitfall, which, like the former, is rather a plaything of little boys than a serious business of the gardener. The pitfall is a round hole with steep or shelving sides; from the edge towards the centre there projects a piece of wood, with what may be called a green-stick fracture; on the tip of this little platform is placed the bait. The rat climbs out

[1] The ordinary fence (*Haga*) consists of a series of horizontal rails laid one atop of the other and between uprights at frequent intervals. There is another kind, *Haga-Embo-femi* (possibly the 'big man' or 'elder man' fence), where advantage is taken of a large tree-trunk, and the fence made to slope across it. Two cross-sections are shown:



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241 789 a neglector of gardens, to drive him away not only from your garden but from his own. The process is called *batetekari*, 'throwing away the taro', and the word is used not only in the literal sense but for other kinds of sorcery.

8. *Garden Labour*

461 241 The Orokaiva words for 'work' and 'garden' are one and the same—*pure*.[1] It has been frequently pointed out that the garden provides the mainstay of the native's life, and requires the greatest share of what hard work he has to do. A rough compilation made in an Aiga village showed that 48 per cent. of a man's work, 43 per cent. of a woman's, were in the garden. But in this compilation the term 'work' was allowed a very wide connotation, and covered a good deal of what the native would himself hardly call by that name. A stricter definition would have made the proportion much higher.

241 462 Part of the work is in the nature of routine—the weeding, the replanting of small batches as the taro is used, the felling of a little extra bush, and so on; part is initial work—the felling of a large area and the planting out of all available *bere*, and the construction of the fence. The larger share of the routine falls to the women; the hardest of the initial work to the men. The rough percentages given above do not indicate of course that women do less work in the gardens than men do. Rather the contrary is the case: the wife's working hours are longer both in the village and out of it.

241 592 In native horticulture, as we might expect, the immediate family—a man, his wife or wives, and their children—is a self-sufficing unit. When there are two wives it will be usual for them to work on separate plots of the husband's garden. Girls accompany their mothers to [854] work, from the time when they are carried, as small somnolent balls only visible through the meshes of a string bag, until they are buxom damsels who expect to see admirers peeping at them from the bush. Boys may

[1] Aiga, *pure*; Binandele, *bure*.